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## **New wars in North eastern Nigeria: Towards overcoming the challenges of sustainable peacebuilding**

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### **Abstract**

Events of insurgency since 2009 have caused numerous challenges to Politicians and Security apparatus in Nigeria. This forced the state to lay greater emphasis towards changing its tactics in dealing with violent conflicts in Northern Nigeria. Some of the apparently noted challenges were the increasing number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and desire to restore peace in the country. This article follows the trend and investigates the challenges this phenomenon posed to sustainable peacebuilding in North-eastern states of Nigeria. The study argues that once the roots of new wars are not addressed through de-radicalization, checkmating corruption, enhanced border surveillance and the control of the proliferation of Small and Light Weapon (SALW), attention to intelligence reports and effective community policing, and commitment to poverty alleviation, overcoming the challenges of insurgency will not be achieved. It further shows that poor attention given to intelligence reports, religiosity and radicalism, effective community policing is what keep the reoccurrence of insurgency in North eastern Nigeria.

**Keywords:** New wars, sustainable peacebuilding, displacement, Boko haram insurgency

### **1. Introduction**

Events of Boko Haram insurgency since 2009 has had a devastating effects on the security of lives and properties of especially women and children in the North eastern States, Nigeria. In 2014 alone, there were an estimated 1.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the six states of the Northeast (Adamawa, Borno, Bauchi, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe) with over 90 percent are living in host communities (UNICEF, 2014) <sup>[13]</sup>. By late 2015, there has been a dramatic increase (58%) in the number of insurgency related IDPs in the three North East states, namely, Borno, Adamawa and Yobe, reaching almost 2 million (UNICEF, 2015) <sup>[14]</sup>. However, from 2016 the activities of Boko Haram insurgent have been physically deterred by the Military with a renewed strategy and commitment. Nevertheless, the devastating consequence of the activities of Boko haram have left thousands of people displaced from their homes. According to the Internally Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC), there were about 2.1 million IDPs in Nigeria as at December 2016. About 85% was as a result of the activities of Boko Haram while the rest were caused by communal violence. The most fundamental goal of the Nigeria State is repatriating refugees and resettling internally displaced persons as well as building sustainable peace in the already affected areas. The aim of this paper is to investigate the challenges of an increasing number of IDPs posed to sustainable peacebuilding in North-eastern states of Nigeria.

### **2. Review of Related Literature: Conceptualization and the Root of New Wars in North East, Nigeria**

Several authors in the social sciences, such as (Collier, 2000; Duffield, 2001; Dietrich, Jung, 2003; Kaldor, 2007; Munkler, 2004) <sup>[1, 2, 5, 7, 10]</sup> etc., have all embraced the *new wars* paradigm. They all argue that since the end of the 20th century, violent conflicts are absolutely different from the old ones i.e. 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century wars. The argument is that these new wars beside being unique in their scope, funding sources, methods, they are characterized by low intensity combined with greater levels of ruthlessness and with the deliberate targeting of civilians (Males'evic', 2008) <sup>[9]</sup>. In terms of scope, new wars are civil rather than inter-state conflicts. While their financing model is external rather than internal.

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In contrast with the conventional wars, new wars are less restrained and more atrocious in the methods thereby increasing the number of civilian casualties both killed and kidnapped.

One of the root causes of new wars in the world and especially in Africa is state failure. The inability of some States to compete favorably with others at the global level weakens both the state's economy and its capacity to extract revenue, thus paving way for systematic corruption, criminality and thus the general privatization of violence. State failure creates chaotic atmosphere where armed warlords control the remnants of state structures, and relying on foreign remittances and international aid invoke identity politics to spread terror among those deemed a threat to their religious or ethnic group (Males'evic', 2008) <sup>[9]</sup>. Between 2009 and 2014, there was a partial failure of Nigerian State to tackle the Boko haram insurgence basically as a result of political unwillingness and gross systemic corruption in the polity. This gave room for the general privatization of violence by the Boko haram terrorist which claims dozens of lives and huge sum of property coupled with severe human right abuses of especially women and children.

Another fundamental cause of the new wars in the Africa is the economic liberalization of trade and finance, which aided as ever before an easier flow of both human and material resources that can be accessed in all parts of the world (Podder, 2013) <sup>[11]</sup>. Shaw (2005) <sup>[12]</sup> and Kaldor (2004) <sup>[6]</sup> believed that the transformative power of economic globalization has resulted into two distinct warfare, namely, the parasitic or predatory wars and the technologically advanced western forms of warfare.

The third possible root of the Boko haram insurgency the activities of conflict entrepreneurs. According to Eide (1997) <sup>[3]</sup> conflict entrepreneurs " are actors who use a specific situation or condition for the purpose of establishing a conflict in order to gain something through the exploitation of new power relationships. The gain can be personal (economic wealth, political power)". Conflict entrepreneurs often mobilize individuals through three general tactics: appeals to ethnic, religious, and/or ideological solidarity; patronage; and positive or negative promises regarding security. Violent conflict can be alleviated by converting militant groups into parties or other political actors that will still use mobilization tools such as appeals to ideological solidarity, patronage, and promises of greater security, but in a non-violent way.

The Boko haram conflict has been allegedly perpetrated by conflict entrepreneurs from among the politicians, security agencies and criminal gangs.

### 3. Sustainable Peacebuilding in the North East Nigeria

Sustainable peacebuilding usually arises from the aftermath of a total breakdown of political and social order as a result of war or other forms of protracted violence, and it accompanied disillusionment, moral despair and lethargy amongst large section of the postwar society (Giessmann, 2013) <sup>[4]</sup>. According to the UN Agenda for Peace (2009), *sustainable peacebuilding* refers to "A range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development. Peacebuilding strategies must be coherent and tailored to the specific needs of the

country concerned, based on national ownership, and should comprise a carefully prioritized, sequenced, and relatively narrow set of activities aimed at achieving the above objectives." The UN 2009 report further identified five priority areas for international assistance, namely: Support to basic safety and security; Political processes; Provision of basic services; Restoration of core government functions; and Economic revitalization.

### 3.1 Challenges for Sustainable Peace Building In the North East, Nigeria

- a. Putting to an end military or violent exchanges through decommissioning of arms, and the demobilization of combatants. With regards to this, an impressive effort has been made by the Nigerian state through its Military Joint Task Force (JTF) in both defensive and offensive against the Boko haram. Most of the strong holds of the insurgents were captured, some members of the group were detained, and several others surrendered. Similarly, in an effort to reduce military presence within the region, the several check points that were all around the North east were greatly minimized to allow the civilian populace a sense of peace. To this effect, the challenge that still remains to sustainable peacebuilding in the region is the minimization of the use of brute force. In addition, establishing non-violent modes of resolving the present and future conflicts is another challenge.
- b. Protecting human rights of victims is one of the most challenging aspect of sustainable peacebuilding. The increasing allegation of human right violence against IDPs is worrisome. For example, the allegation of the diversion of some relief items as observed by the UN. In an interview, Sani Babagana, a United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) IDP protection monitor in Geidam affirmed that "...after the materials were delivered and received by the authorities of the local council, only very few of the IDPs benefitted from the materials. The NEMA officials bribed the local council officials by giving them a portion of the items while they carted away the bulk of the relief." In addition, the International Criminal Court (ICC) accused the Nigerian Security agencies of possible war crimes. Some of these allegations were summarized in a report thus, "During such arrest operations boys and men were reportedly arbitrarily targeted and arrested by Nigerian Security Forces. Since 2011, Nigerian Security Forces have reportedly arrested at least 20,000 people, mostly young men in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States. Altogether, more than 7,000 people reportedly died in military detention since March 2011 due to illness, poor condition and overcrowding of detention facilities, torture, ill-treatment and extrajudicial executions" (ICC, 2015).
- c. Rehabilitation and reintegration program. Providing psycho-social or trauma healing services to victims of severe atrocities is imperative to sustainable peace building. The clash between the Boko Haram insurgents and the government have affected the lives and properties of so many people in Nigeria, especially in the North east. Many have been killed through bombing, sporadic gun shots, some were abducted, many women and children were abused. These have greatly subjected the victims and their families to

serious to psychological trauma. In addition, those displaced were not able to feed and cater for their families and had to rely on humanitarian assistance. The personal psychological feelings of parents towards discharging their family responsibility is equally capable of subjecting them to psychological trauma. In this regard, trauma counseling is one of the major areas of challenge to building sustainable peace in the affected societies. Owing to the multiple dimensions of the psychological stress that affects the IDPs, the efforts of the federal government and other stakeholders in sustainable peace building has to be doubled up.

- d. Humanitarian supports is another vital instrument to building a sustainable peace. Although there have been several humanitarian supports from government agencies, especially NEMA (National Emergency Management Agency) and other donor agencies such as the UNICEF; the demands of IDPs is diverse. These ranges from the need for subsistence, cloth, shelter, basic health care, basic education, hygiene among others. In this regard some IDPs are given food only ones daily least to improve on their other needs. The has given an opening for some indecent interaction on the IDPs. There have being several accusations on the IDP managements that some authorities abuse women and children for food.
- e. Coordinating the roles of numerous internal and external parties involved in such interrelated effort of sustainable peace building is another task on the government. Civil society, particularly non-governmental organizations (NGOs), can be effective as a means to solve some of the problems of weak states. First, NGOs serve important roles as watchdog groups, particularly in areas such as human rights and corruption. Second, NGOs can be important capacity-builders, particularly at local levels. Some NGOs in the Balkans have provided services directly to local citizens as a means of bypassing criminal elements' and corrupt states' abuses in distribution. Nevertheless, some NGOs may have their own organizational interest that may be inconsistent with the goals of the State capable of compromising its sovereignty. It is therefore, imperative for the government to carefully coordinate the activities of the NGOs and not allowing any organization to partake in the process of sustainable peacebuilding.
- f. Repatriating refugees and resettling internally displaced persons. The UNHCR reveals that some 10,000 Nigerians have crossed into neighboring Cameroon, Chad and Niger in recent months. Most have sought refuge in Cameroon according to local authorities. The number of Nigerian refugees in Niger is 2,700 and in Chad 150 (Adebowale, 2013). Repatriating these large number of refugees from various neighboring countries is a paramount. Similarly, resettling the IDPs back to the localities and generating an environment of trust in order for social relations to function properly, aiding in economic reconstruction, building and maintaining the operation of institutions to provide such services.

#### **4. Overcoming the Challenges to Sustainable Peacebuilding in North East, Nigeria**

##### **4.1 De-radicalization**

A process through which individuals abandon extremist

worldviews, forswear violence to effect social change, and accept more incremental political pluralism (Khan, 2015) <sup>[8]</sup>. The Government of Nigeria should enhance and encourage de-radicalization programs such as prevention programs in schools, public information and communication campaign, counseling programs etc.

##### **4.2 Commitment to poverty alleviation.**

Several authors on the Boko haram insurgency emphasized that poverty is the main cause of the phenomenon. The failure on the side of government to alleviate poverty through providing the basic infrastructure, employment, etc., has been instrumental to the emergence of Boko haram. The general level of poverty was utilized by the book haram to recruit members mainly from the youth. Unless there is a serious commitment in side of government towards poverty alleviation, book haram and the likes will continue to use this opportunity to execute their mission.

##### **4.3 Attention to intelligence reports and effective community policing.**

Prior to their manifestation confrontation with the government, the Boko haram took a fairly long time propagating convincing and recruiting members without much effort from the government to take action in the available intel on the group's activities. It is quit surprising to notice the strength of Boko haram in Sambisa Forest. In order to avoid future regrouping of Boko haram and even emergence of similar groups, Nigerian security agencies must pay attention to intelligence reports and effective community policing to carefully detect any terrorist tendencies.

##### **4.4 Enhanced border surveillance and the control of the proliferation of SALW.**

There is no doubt that the influx of SALW through the country's porous border has greatly contributed to the activities of insurgents. The level at which Nigerian borders especially the land borders are managed is not adequate. Unless an enhanced and a more sophisticated border surveillance is put in place, proliferation of SALW will continue to engender achievement of sustainable peacebuilding the country, especially the North east.

##### **4.5 Checkmating corruption**

Indeed, corruption is one of the bane of Nigeria's development in almost all ramifications. It is one of the sources of inequality in the distribution of wealth and administration of justice in Nigeria, which the Boko haram use as a pretext to convince individuals to subscribe to their ideology. Corruption has also deepened the extent of poverty in the country. Even in the of IDPs several relief materials including food items and funds were diverted. Therefore, for sustainable peace to reign, corruption has to be adequately checkmated.

#### **5. Conclusion**

The study argues that once the roots of *new wars* are not addressed through de-radicalization, good governance and sustainable peacebuilding, overcoming the challenges of insurgency will not be achieved. It further shows that poor attention given to intelligence reports, religiosity and radicalism, effective community policing is what keep the reoccurrence of insurgency in Northern Nigeria.

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